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United States Department of Agriculture

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE MARKET BASKET
by
Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

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PEACHES ARE PLENTIFUL

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"The biggest peach year since the record-breaking crop of '31" -- that's what crop reporters in the U. S. Department of Agriculture are predicting for 1941. They fully expect this year's crop to walk away with honors of "third largest on record."

In other words -- by even the most conservative estimates -- there'll be plenty of peaches this summer.

Supplying the early market now are ten Southern peach States -- with a crop half again as large as it was last year. And by the middle of July, the mid-season peach crop from these States will be coming to market. The late crop in the northern and western States will be available a little later, -- probably reaching "peak" movement about mid-August.

Peaches come in white and yellow -- with cling and free stones. Yellow-fleshed peaches outrank the white-fleshed varieties in food value, chiefly because they are such a good source of vitamin A. According to home economists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture, a medium-sized dish of yellow peaches will supply about one-third of the vitamin A an adult needs for a day. This vitamin, of course, is needed by both grown-ups and children for good nutrition.

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Other than vitamin A, there's little difference in food value among peaches. Usually it's personal preference and the way you intend to use the peaches that decides the kind to buy.

Except for the very early ones -- "clings" are usually not eaten fresh. However, they are especially suitable for cooking, for pickling, and for commercial canning.

Most home canners prefer midseason or late yellow-fleshed peaches. Some of the well-known varieties in this class are Elberta, Salwey, J. H. Hale, Late Crawford, and Smock. For those who prefer to can white-fleshed peaches, Belle, Hiley, and Champion are three varieties that fill the bill.

No matter what variety of peach you buy, look carefully at its complexion -- the real background color of the peach skin under its rosy markings. This peach complexion should be whitish-green or yellowish. If it is dark green instead, you can be pretty sure the peach will never ripen satisfactorily. Instead it will shrivel, be tough and rubbery, and have little flavor.

Naturally, any careful buyer will avoid peaches that show obvious signs of inferior quality. These include brown spots of peach rot, worm holes, and growth cracks.

For most purposes, firm-ripe peaches are the best. If you're going to eat them the same day you buy them, soft-ripe peaches are satisfactory. And if you're buying a large quantity to use gradually, even slightly underripe peaches are suitable -- if their ground color is whitish-green or yellowish. Leave them out at room temperature to ripen.

In peach season, and especially at the beginning of it, most peach fanciers like this fruit served simply -- sliced, with cream and sugar. Do not peel the peaches long ahead of time, or they'll turn blackish where they are exposed to the air.

Neither cooking nor canning changes the food value of the peach enough to make any difference.

Some of the best cooked peach dishes are peach pie -- made after the fashion of apple pie -- peach cobbler, and peach dumplings. To make a peach dumpling, for an individual dessert, roll out pastry dough in rounds about the size of a fruit plate. In the center, put a peeled peach with the pit removed. Sprinkle the peach with a mixture of sugar, cinnamon, and a few grains of salt. Dot with butter and lift up and press the edges of the dough together. Put in greased muffin tins and bake in a moderate oven (350° to 375° F.) for about half an hour. Serve hot -- with or without a sauce over it.

Peaches are one of the easiest of all fruits to can at home. They may be processed in a big wash boiler, a large bucket, or any vessel that's big enough to hold the containers and allow 2 or 3 inches of water above them.

Put up peaches in plain tin cans, number 2 or 3 size, or in pint or quart glass jars. It's a good idea to cook the peaches 4 to 8 minutes before packing them hot into the cans. Cook them in a sirup. This short precooking shrinks the fruit so that it packs into the container better and cuts the processing time down somewhat.

How sweet to make the sirup to go on peaches depends on the sweetness of the fruit. Anywhere from 5 to 12 cups of sugar to a gallon of water are used. Boil the sugar and water for about 5 minutes to make the sirup. And put one cracked peach pit in for every quart of sirup to improve flavor. Strain out these pits before you use the sirup.

Complete directions for canning peaches, with exact processing time for different altitudes may be found in "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats," Farmers' Bulletin 1762 of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Single copies may be obtained free from the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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CLOTHES FOR THE WORKING WOMAN

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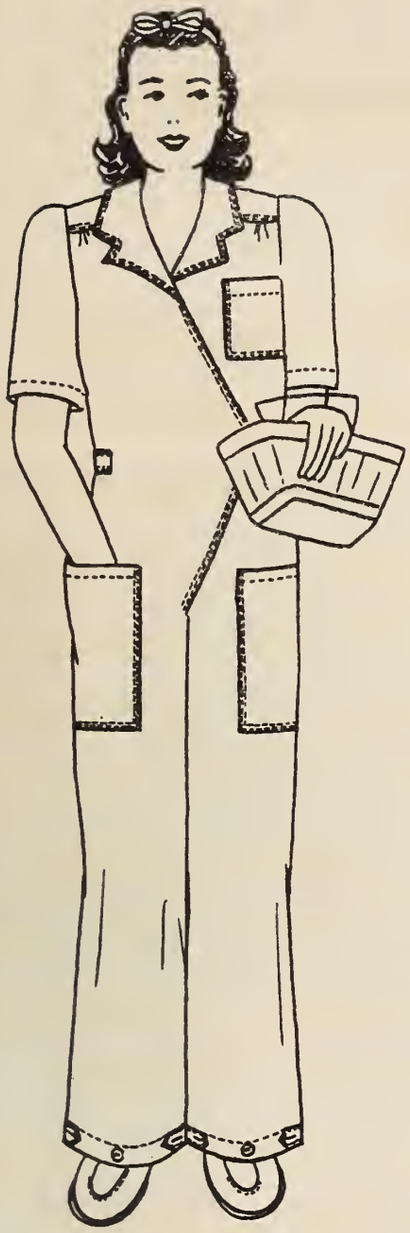
"Something new" in women's clothing has been designed by textile specialists in the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Home Economics.

That something new is a group of designs for clothes fashioned especially for women who do very active work — the kind of work for which ordinary dresses are unsuitable. These designs have just been released to pattern markers and the clothing trade. And it is expected that they will be adopted widely as women take over more and more jobs in the National Defense Program.

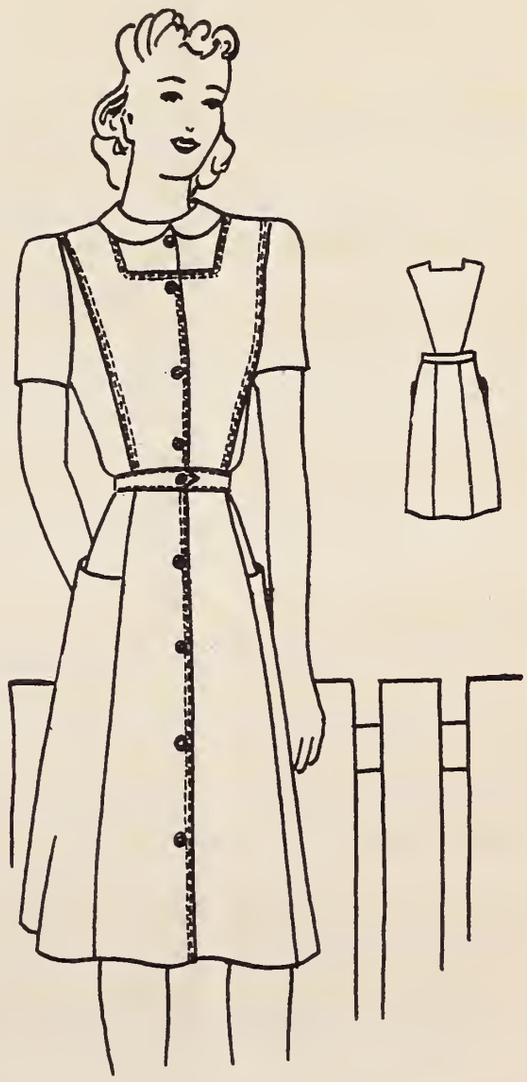
Among the new work clothes, there are some designed for women who do farm chores. Others are for heavier farm work — for work in factories — and for more strenuous household tasks.

Originator of the new designs is Miss Clarice Scott, one of the clothing experts of the Bureau of Home Economics staff.

"For years," explains Miss Scott, "the woman who does hard, active work has been the forgotten woman of the fashion page. Plenty of attention has been given to work clothes for the 'white collar' girl. But a woman who does work such as helping with the milking or holding down a factory job has had little choice of what to wear. Usually, of necessity, her work outfit has had to be an inexpensive housedress or perhaps a pair of men's coveralls or overalls. None of these exactly suit her purpose."



New coverette designed by the Bureau of Home Economics of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Farm women will find many uses for this outfit--on washday, tending the chickens, milking, and gardening. Made from cotton seersucker, it is cool, comfortable, and becoming.



This coverall apron is practical for the farm or factory. Wear it over a dress for protection. Or combine it with a blouse for a sensible working uniform. Front and back bibs keep this apron from slipping off the shoulders. Pockets are roomy but safely located.

So Miss Scott and her co-workers set to studying the problem. And they designed some new work clothes along functional lines. That is, they studied a particular job -- then worked out a sensible outfit for that job. If the job called for stooping and reaching, then stooping room and reaching room were built into the work outfit. If the job was done around dangerous machinery, Miss Scott worked for "safety first" in the outfit -- located pockets so they wouldn't catch on things, and had no loose sashes or ties.

Furthermore, Miss Scott saw to it that every work outfit was comfortable to wear. She saw to it that it was built on sound clothing construction lines -- was simple to make and not wasteful to cut out of material of regulation width. The outfit had to be easy to wash and to iron. It had to be easy to put on and take off. And it had to be attractive.

First outfit to be released by Miss Scott was a popular coverette, designed for farm wear. This outfit is what many a farm woman has always wanted for gardening, wash day, tending the chickens, and milking.

"The coverette is a one-piece garment with a surplice closing," as Miss Scott describes it. "All you have to do to get into it is to step in, pull it up, and tie the sash ends. If your're working in the garden, maybe you'll want to snap the trouser legs up around your ankles."

The best material for a coverette is good cotton seersucker, according to Miss Scott. Seersucker is cool, easy to wash. And it isn't necessary to wear many undergarments under a seersucker coverette. That makes for coolness and cuts down on washings.

Since the coverettes were released, Miss Scott has perfected a number of other up-to-the-minute work clothing designs for the busy woman of today.

Her coverall apron is suitable for both farm and factory. This apron may be worn over a dress for protection. Or it may be worn with a blouse as a sensible working garb.

"The apron is princess cut with built up sides and a bib, front and back, to keep it from sliding off the shoulders," says Miss Scott. "It has large, roomy pockets. But these pockets are located where they are not likely to catch on anything. Good materials for such an apron are heavy chambray, denim, or showerproofed cotton cotton if you wear it outdoors much."

For women who do heavier work around the farm, Miss Scott has designed a sturdy field suit. The legs of this suit are shaped in at the ankles and closed with a slide fastener to keep them out of the dirt. And as a special feature, there are half sleeves for the jacket. These sleeves are snapped on for protection against sunburn and scratches. But if you want freedom of short sleeves, you may simply unsnap the lower sleeves and lay them aside.

For certain types of work in defense industries, Miss Scott has designed a one-piece coverall. This suit has plenty of room for action. And there's gathered fullness set in below the shoulder yoke, so that the suit won't restrict the upper arm or shoulders.

To complete this outfit, there is a cap with a visor to protect the hair and shade the eyes. The cap lies flat and can be ironed easily and may be drawn up and adjusted to different head sizes.

Other new work outfits designed by the Bureau of Home Economics and released to pattern makers and the clothing trade include culottes for housework, a complete shower-proof cotton outfit for wet weather, a jumper slack suit, and easy-to-make utility aprons.

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SUMMER SQUASHES AND CUCUMBERS

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It's a big party—when the squash family gets together for a summer reunion at the market. A botanist would call these summer squashes "pumpkins"—but for cooking purposes they go by the name of "squash."

The cymling is one of the first to appear. It's small and flat with scallops around the edge. When this squash is young, the rind is soft and smooth and it is pale green, yellow, or white in color. Often it's called "scallop" or "pattypan" because of its flat, scalloped shape.

Then there are the yellow summer squashes—crook-neck and straight-neck, giant and dwarf. The old summer crook-neck squash has a rough skin and a crooked neck. But through careful breeding, the plant scientists have straightened the neck so the squash will pack better in crates for shipping.

Vegetable marrows are another type of squash—well known in Europe, but not so familiar in America. The marrows are shaped like a stretched out egg. They are green or creamy in color. One of the best known is the Zucchini, a native of Italy, but it now flourishes in the United States. The Zucchini is long and slender, somewhat like a cucumber except for its smooth, glossy skin.

All these squashes furnish some vitamins, but the yellow-fleshed ones rank highest with the nutritionists. The yellow color of the flesh is a sign that the squashes are a rich source of Vitamin A.

Food shoppers often overlook squashes, in spite of the bright colors that beckon to the adventurous cook. But marketing specialists say it's just a matter of getting acquainted. Each of the different summer squashes has its own mild flavor--enjoyed by most everyone who has tried them.

If you "pick" your squashes at the market, try to get those that are heavy for their size and fresh-looking. Summer squashes are usually cooked without paring, so be sure the rind is soft and free from marks or bruises.

You can cook squashes by any of the standard methods used for other vegetables. Boiling is one of the simplest. Wash the rind thoroughly and cut the squash into small pieces. Then drop into lightly salted, boiling water. But remember that summer squashes are so juicy that they need only a little water to keep from scorching. Simmer about 15 minutes, or until the squash is tender. Squash is one of the vegetables that needs plenty of butter or other fat, besides salt and pepper for seasoning.

"Panning" is another easy way to cook squash. Have the squash washed and cut in small pieces, leaving the rind on unless it is very tough. Use a covered pan with a little fat added, but no water. Cook at moderate heat for 10 or 15 minutes. Then take off the cover and cook for a few minutes longer to let the liquid evaporate.

Squash fried golden brown and crisp is another good version of this summer vegetable. Wash the squash and cut it in thin, even slices. Sprinkle the slices with salt and a little flour, then fry in shallow fat. Or, dip in batter and fry in deep fat.

As a scalloped dish, squash is hard to beat. And it's a good way to use left-over squash--by itself, or with other vegetables. Or you can use fresh squash with tomatoes in a scalloped dish. Start by cooking chopped onion, green pepper, and other seasonings, in a little fat. Then add the tomatoes, and finally the squash. Cook for a short time on top of the stove, and finish in a moderate oven.

For a fancy dinner, capitalize on the scalloped shape of cymlings and serve them baked in the shell. Scoop out the center, chop this pulp and mix it with tomato and seasonings. Boil the cymling shell a few minutes, then pack in the stuffing and top with buttered breadcrumbs. Bake in a moderate oven until brown on top.

The story of cucumbers follows the same pattern as the squashes. Both vegetables belong to the same botanical family--the cucurbits. They grow about the same way, and they taste much alike when cooked.

Cucumbers as a cooked vegetable adds one more idea to your list of dinner possibilities. And you'll find that hot cucumbers are just as good as the cold slices and cucumber sticks that appear so often in summer salads and relish trays.

Fried cucumbers, buttered cucumbers, and mashed cucumbers are some of the old-time ideas that modern cooks are bringing up-to-date. It's best to follow the scientific cooking methods and cook the cucumbers quickly, without preliminary soaking and salting. Letting the cucumbers stand in salt makes them flabby instead of crisp, the experts have found.

For a very special vegetable dish, the home economists suggest stuffed and baked cucumbers. Cucumbers, cut lengthwise, can be scooped out to make neat little boats that will hold a mound of tasty stuffing. Boil the cucumber boats about 10 minutes, fill with stuffing, and bake until brown on top.

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ON JUDGING QUALITY IN BATH TOWELS

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Quality in bath towels has a part in summer time comfort. When the mercury rises everybody wants more baths, more showers, dips in the ocean, swims in the lake, with a good rub down afterwards. A good towel takes up the water and leaves the skin dry and tingling, not moist or sticky.

Fortunately some good-quality towels are inexpensive, although at low price they may not come in every color or design. To judge the right quality towel for her budget, the homemaker needs to know far more than price.

"Before buying any towel, examine the weave, selvages, hems, size, and read all the labels," suggests Mrs. Bess Morrison, textile specialist of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. "Compare towels on these points before buying. You will note differences in the quality among towels of the same price, as well as among those of varying prices.

"Informative labels on towels are new, and still are not in general use, but it will pay homemakers to look for them," according to Mrs. Morrison. "Such labels may tell the weight of the towel per square yard, the number of loops in a square inch of the pile, the amount of moisture a square yard of the towel will absorb, and the breaking strength of the foundation yarns, both in warp

and filling. In judging these points, the rule is the higher the figure, the better the quality. Information on labels enables the homemaker to select the best towels within a given price range. She can also tell whether higher priced towels are worth the extra money.

"Then to judge the quality of towels that have no labels--first of all, examine the foundation weave of the towel," suggests Mrs. Morrison. "A close, firm foundation weave will hold the pile yarns securely, while a loose open weave allows the loops to pull out readily. If most of the towel is covered entirely with loops so that it is difficult to see the foundation construction, examine the weave in the hem. It is necessarily the same as the weave in the body of the towel.

"Many towels have borders, and the weave in these is another point worth considering. If yarns contrasting in size and color are packed too tightly in these border spaces, they are apt to shrink and draw in when washed. The towels will not hang straight and smooth on the rack, and the ends will look like a ruffle. Tightly packed border yarns, however, are not always a sign of poor quality. The best way to judge this point is to pull the towel at the border. If it feels springy, it likely will not shrink and draw.

"Look at the selvages," further suggests Mrs. Morrison. "For good wear, each filling yarn should bind the edge warp yarn. Sometimes the crosswise yarns go almost to the edge--within a yarn or two. This leaves loose floating yarns along the very edge of the towel. These loose yarns catch easily and break. When the few binding yarns wear out, the life of the towel is nearly over because the warp yarns readily fray out. This type of selvage is commonly found on many

of the higher priced towels as well as on the less expensive ones.

"Another edge finish that marks poor quality is lockstitching. This finish, which resembles machine overcasting, is frequently used over a cut edge. Towels with this type of edge are woven on wide looms with a plain stripe between the looped areas, and then cut apart down the middle of this plain section. Such cutting, of course, does away with the selvage. The long lock stitches are apt to catch and break, then the raw edges will fray.

"The stitching at the end of the hems on good towels goes right to the edge and then back a little so that the corners are caught securely, and there are no loose hanging threads," Mrs. Morrison says. "The hem ends are closed and the edge of the turn-under on each hem is flush with the edge of the towel. Examine the stitching all the way across the hem as well as at the ends. Loose threads caught in the stitching or knots in the thread often cause breaks. The hem will then rip out and the ends ravel.

"When shopping for towels consider what sizes will be best for your needs. Until a few years ago every towel manufacturer had his own set of measurements. As a result there were nearly 100 different sizes on the market. Now the number is reduced to six, and most manufacturers make towels in these sizes. Small towels are generally 16 by 30 or 18 by 36 inches, medium-sized, 20 by 40, or 22 by 44 inches, and the large ones measure 24 by 46 or 24 by 48. The small towels are easiest for children to handle. They are also suitable for face towels if one enjoys the rough texture.

"Medium-sized towels are a good selection for the nearly grown children. Some women also prefer these to the very large towels for they are big enough to do a good job yet not cumbersome to use. Towels of the medium size are lighter to handle when wet and make for smaller laundry bills if the wash is done outside of the home and paid by the pound. Many men though and some women like extra large towels. For them, the 24 by 46 or 48-inch size is the right choice. Since most towels on the market nowadays conform fairly well to these established sizes, the homemaker will have little difficulty in getting the size she wants."

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MAKING EATING FUN

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"Good, appetizing food is the thing that sells good nutrition to the family," says Ruth Van Deman, home economist of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. "It includes everything that makes eating fun. It's cheerful table conversation, comradeship, and laughter. Most of all it's food so good you eat it for the sheer joy of eating--not because it's 'good for you'. It's not necessarily expensive food. But it's food attractively served, skillfully planned, and well-cooked. Unless meals have in them the element of human satisfaction they may go half eaten. And, uneaten, even the best-planned assortment of food does not add up to a well-balanced diet. Table, tongue and tummy are key points along any road to good nutrition."

Miss Van Deman is co-author of one of the most widely distributed cookbooks in the United States--"Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes"--on sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

What often "sells" food to the family at the table is the way it is served. Attractive garnishes help make food more appetizing in appearance. But don't let garnishes stop with pimiento and parsley. Use some imagination. Make the color of foods contribute something. Combine the rich brown of pot roast with the orange of carrots--the golden hue of ripe peaches with the deep purple of blackberries--the

bright crimson of tomatoes on a cool bed of salad greens.

Serve hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Have all foods easy to eat--no tough meat that can't be cut--and no salads in which the lettuce slides off the plate--no seeds in the orange juice. Keep your meals from getting into a rut. Try serving dinner outdoors in the back yard or in a nearby park this summer-in front of the fireplace this winter.

Skillful meal planning calls for a knowledge of food values--of available supplies of food--and of foods that combine well together.

"It's smart to remember the family's favorite dishes and serve them often," suggests Miss Van Deman. "Build several nutritious meal combinations around them. When you plan a meal keep the texture of foods in mind. Don't have all soft foods, nor all crisp ones. It's better to work out some interesting contrasts--crunchy toast with soup, crisp cabbage slaw with baked beans, chopped celery with peanut butter as a sandwich filling. Don't serve all watery vegetables. And never serve two starchy vegetables at the same meal."

But when it comes to getting the family really interested in eating, nothing can do so much as good cooking.

"Learning to cook is even more important today than it was in Grandma's time," says Miss Van Deman. "For we know now more about the food values that you gain or lose by cooking. And today it's a lot easier to learn to cook. Simple foolproof cookery rules have been worked out by the home economists. Cooking equipment is much more convenient. And materials to work with are more varied and plentiful than ever before. It's easy to learn the basic principles that make for successful cooking--that conserve the food value and make food taste best."

Here are some of the basic cooking principles to know.

When cooking vegetables, remember to use little water. Cook them a short ti

time and never add soda to the cooking water. When you cook green vegetables, leave the lid off the pan. Serve the liquid the vegetables are cooked in—either with the vegetable, or in soups, sauces, or gravies.

Cook all protein foods - meat, eggs, cheese, and milk - at low to moderate temperatures all through the cooking period. High temperatures toughen protein.

The modern method of cooking all meat is to use moderate temperature during all the cooking time. Tender cuts of meat are cooked with no water in an uncovered pan. Tender meats include all cuts of pork and lamb—certain parts of beef—and young well fattened birds.

There's a special method to make cheaper, tougher cuts of meat tender. That is to brown the less-tender cut in hot fat. Then cook it slowly with added liquid in a covered pan. The steam formed by adding water and keeping the lid on the pan is just what is needed to soften meat that has tough connective tissue. Or tough meat may be ground or chopped to break up this tissue—then cooked as though it were tender.

Every modern cook should know about temperature control, not only for meats—but for many oven dishes. In cooking with fat, too, the right temperature can spell success. Fat that gets to the smoking point spoils the flavor of food cooked in it and makes it less digestible.

Lumpy foods are something no good cook can tolerate. It's easy to avoid them by blending starchy material with a little liquid, then carefully stirring this into the rest of the mixture. Or in making gravy or white sauce, cook the flour with the fat to add flavor. Then gradually add the cold liquid and stir until you get that perfect blend.

There are no tested rules for seasoning foods. But it's an art well-worth practicing to perfect. Experiment with herbs in poultry stuffing, in a meat loaf, or a vegetable curry. Try different taste contrasts—a dash of lemon with melon, a spicy sauce on beets, or mint stuffing with roast lamb.

And above all, learn to cook quickly and easily so you won't be worn out at meal time, so that you, too, can taste the element of human satisfaction in the food that you have prepared.

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